

NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

IS IT REAL?

Visitors who see one of the modern mounts of bears, lions, deer and other large animals displayed at the Royal Ontario Museum, ask—"But is it real?"

They mean, we believe, is it a man-made imitation, or is it the actual animal. The answer is a compromise, for these exhibits are both. The part you see, the skin, is real but its support is, of course, artificial. Through long and exacting stages of measuring, modelling and moulding, a form is made, patterned after a living animal. The shape of muscle and bone, in life-like pose, is built strong and light. Over this form the original but preserved skin is carefully fitted and cemented in place.

Modern taxidermy is much more difficult and exacting than the old "stuffing" process. It is sculpturing rather than upholstering. The Museum attempts to give its modern mounts the effect of reality, and to impart to their motionless forms some illusion of life. The question, "Is it real?" seems to indicate that sometimes the taxidermist has succeeded.

LONG BEFORE HOLLYWOOD

Not so original after all are the Hollywood movie stars whose footprints are being preserved for posterity. The Royal Ontario Museum has evidence that an inhabitant of Nova Scotia had his preserved about 325 million years ago. He walked in the sand of the beach; the sand hardened into sandstone; and there in the Museum are his footprints millions of years later. Even the ripples left in the sand by the prehistoric ocean show clearly. Certainly this five-toed Nova Scotia amphibian didn't dream that he was taking such an important step that day.

NATURE AND MAN

"The record of nature through countless ages. The arts of man through all the years." These words are inscribed in stone near the entrance to the Royal Ontario Museum. They truly describe one of Ontario's great educational, scientific and cultural institutions. Know your Museum better.

FUR BUYERS AND FUR BEARERS

Because of the new tax on all fur, not of old stock, you should be especially careful in making a fur coat purchase. You should be concerned mainly with quality and appearance, but it would add interest to know something of the animals which have contributed their pelts to your comfortable, attractive garment.

A careful inspection of the animals displayed in the Royal Ontario Museum's galleries will give you a good idea of what Canada offers to the fur trade. One attractive exhibit shows the principal steps in transforming common muskrat into luxurious Hudson seal. Even a doll-sized garment is included to represent the finished product.

PRECISION BORING BEFORE THE DAYS OF STEEL

Today, when machine tools and precision instruments are so vital, we realize the importance of the highly tempered steel of which they are made. But how did man bore his stone tools before he had metal? In the Royal Ontario Museum are hundreds of stone and shell objects bored accurately by the Indians of Ontario before the white man came. Pipes, beads, pendants and ornaments of many kinds show perforations, varying in size from the large pipe bowl, to the amazingly long and narrow hole in a pipe stem or a shell bead. Look at the drillings carefully and you will see that they taper; each is a cone (or two cones meeting at their tips), unlike the cylindrical perforation of our modern steel drills. The operator held a small stick between his hands, and rotated it against the stone or shell to be perforated, often with a few grains of sand as an abrasive. Of course the stick was worn down rapidly, but it was replaced over and over again. With patience and skill the hole was bored. It is a far cry from this technique to the mass-production of today, but in each case there is a similar need for precision, accuracy and care.

TRAVEL IN TIME AND SPACE

Life in other lands and times is bountifully illustrated by objects in the Royal Ontario Museum. One can obtain impressions of the dawn days of the dinosaurs, review life in ancient Egypt, go on imaginative hunts with the Eskimo, or become familiar with strange fowl from foreign lands. Travel, even within the confines of a museum, is an education.

INFORMATION PLEASE

"Do rats eat soap?"—this is one of hundreds of questions addressed every year to the Royal Ontario Museum, according to Professor J. R. Dymond. The inquirer in this case was concerned over the disappearance of soap from the washroom of his institution. His janitor blamed the rats but the manager wondered. The Museum answered that rats sometimes do eat soap. The Museum specializes in knowledge about animals of all kinds,—animals great and small, animals near at home and animals of far off lands, but especially the animal life of our own country. To judge from the number of enquiries received by the Museum every year people are learning when in doubt to "ask the Museum."

YOUR MUSEUM

When in Toronto you will find the Museum open free from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. As a war measure it is closed on Mondays. There is a 15c. admission on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

